

We are paying a great price for the war that is currently under way; and the least we can do, the very least we can do as a Nation is to make sure that when these honored people come home that they are treated with justice and fairness, that they are able to receive the health care that they have been promised and that they deserve.

As we stand here in the safety of this great Chamber, we should never forget that many of our friends and the families and loved ones from the great Mahoning Valley are in harm's way. So we honor them, and we honor their families, because they have joined in the sacrifice as well.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman.

We also want to recognize all our friends in Youngstown at this time, where at the Italian-American War Veterans Post 3 the veterans and community leaders on April 14 will hold a tribute honoring the Mahoning Valley area sons and daughters at war.

We would like to thank Herman Adams, Ray Ornelas, and Dom Medina for all their help in putting this together and organizing it, helping us to honor those troops.

□ 1730

KEEP SECURITY IN SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PRICE of Georgia). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, in the ongoing debate on Social Security, I think it is essential that we take the time to put a face on the people served by and protected by Social Security.

All of the numbers and charts help us make the outline of the arguments, but it is the letters that I receive from my constituents that show the real face of Social Security. I would like to take the time to show one of those letters, one of the 400-plus letters I have received.

A gentleman named Hector MacDonald from Laredo, Texas. It says, "Dear Congressman CUELLAR, As a member of the National Committee to preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to urge you please oppose any legislation or plan that would divert dedicated Social Security payroll taxes into private individual accounts or in any way harm the benefits, structure or traditional role of Social Security."

As you know, President Roosevelt and Congress created Social Security in 1935 to protect retired Americans from experiencing a poverty ridden old age. And America's more than 35 million seniors have invested their hard earned money into Social Security dur-

ing their long working lives. Social Security represents a covenant between government and its citizens. I therefore stand against the administration's policy and plans to reform Social Security through partial privatization or any other plan that would undermine the promise of the program's full guaranteed lifetime benefits.

One of my top priorities as a citizen and a voter is the protection of Social Security benefits for all current and future retirees. I sincerely hope among your top priorities as an elected official that you will also help defeat the privatization and other proposals that threatened our retirement security.

I urge you to work closely with the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare and protect the benefits we have worked for, paid for and have earned. Very sincerely, Mr. Hector MacDonald" from Laredo, Texas.

Again, I have received many letters like this, and I think this letter, Mr. Speaker, speaks for itself. I received over 400 letters like this one opposing the privatization of Social Security.

I have taken the time to read these letters, and I have taken a great deal of time to carefully review the proposal and listen to all sides of the debate; and after a thorough analysis I have come to see clearly that this proposal to privatize Social Security does not pass my legislative test. That is, it will not make our families stronger.

The current proposal to privatize Social Security jeopardizes our safety net by pulling the security out of Social Security. It takes our guaranteed benefits and gambles them on a stock market. It threatens to pose benefit cuts, raising the retirement age. And finally it assures adding a tremendous sum to our existing \$7 trillion debt.

Social Security has always been the one source free from risk and designed to reserve as a bedrock guarantee for our seniors.

The system was created and has served for generations as social insurance, not social investment; and we owe it to ourselves and our children, especially our seniors, to preserve that bedrock guarantee.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO UNITED STATES GROUP OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to 22 United States Code, 1928a, the order of House of January 4, 2005, and clause 10 of rule I, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the United States Group of the North Atlantic Assembly:

Mr. TANNER of Tennessee,
Mr. ROSS of Arkansas,
Mr. CHANDLER of Kentucky,
Mrs. TAUSCHER of California.

FIGHTING TERRORISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Kentucky?

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting time in the history of the United States, in the history of the world, and in the advancement of freedom.

This afternoon a member of minority made a statement that this war was not a war of choice. Contrary to that opinion, which certainly one has a right to share in this body, I would remind all Members of this House and the people that this was in fact a war that was chosen by Osama bin Laden and even before that by people like Saddam Hussein, those who have subjugated and terrorized their people for decades and even generations.

Osama bin Laden turned his hatred on America after we responded to the request of the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. His aggression was one of the key sparks in the current activities that we find ourselves engaged in right now.

This is a decisive time. In fact, we face the most serious threat to our freedoms and our liberties that we have faced since the end of the Second World War. We are fighting an enemy who has proven it will use whatever violent means necessary to further its cause. Indeed, we are not going to lose because of military strength, but we would lose only if the people of the United States have a loss of resolve.

My encouragement is to stay the course. As we see the development over the past several months around the world there are many, many things to be hopeful for. We recoil in horror at the report of suicide bombers and strolling into crowded markets or onto packed buses and detonating themselves. Are they primarily focusing on our soldiers? No. The preponderance of casualties are attacks on their own people. In fact, this is not an insurgency in the classic sense. It is led by frankly a group of thugs, people filled with hatred, bitterness, criminals by any measure of merit, killing innocent men, women and children.

We watch in stunned belief when such a terror group announces it has taken hostage Americans or others who are innocent, working in Iraq